

MINUTES

Attendance

Members Present: Bruce Carson, Jonathan O'Keeffe
Members Absent: Eduardo Suarez
Planning Department Staff: Jonathan Tucker, Christine Brestrup
Select Board Liaison: Diana Stein
Planning Board Members: Denise Barberet
Others Participating: Walter Wolnik

Discussion

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM.

Mr. Tucker began by reviewing the schedule of events for zoning-related issues leading up to the spring 2009 Annual Town Meeting: citizen petitions due on February 9, list of warrant articles due on March 9, warrant language due on March 23, and Town Meeting to begin on April 29. The ZSC and PB intend to meet on all regularly scheduled dates (first and third Wednesdays of each month) leading up to Town Meeting. The Planning Board could begin holding public hearings on zoning articles beginning at its February 4 meeting if articles are ready at that point.

Mr. O'Keeffe indicated that he would like to have the subcommittee post written minutes from its meetings, and he volunteered to do so.

The subcommittee reviewed and discussed various items from the Draft FY10 Zoning Amendment Work List, other potential zoning changes, and feedback from the public information session that was held on December 3, 2008.

Family Day Care - revisions to section 5.08 of the zoning bylaw, governing accessory uses relating to child care services. These revisions are prompted by recent changes in State law regarding definitions of different categories of day care services.

Taxi Services - revisions to section 3.340.3 and 5.013 of the zoning bylaw, to explicitly define a taxi or limousine service as a principal use under 3.340.3 under certain circumstances, and to define the circumstances under which it would be considered an accessory use.

Potential revisions to parking regulations were discussed, including the possibility of changing the number of parking spaces required per residential unit downtown, which is currently two.

Mr. Tucker gave an update on research he has done regarding other communities' use of payments in lieu of the provision of various services that are required by zoning regulations. No towns in Massachusetts currently use this approach, but many towns elsewhere use it for a variety of purposes, with widely varying monetary amounts.

Mr. Tucker updated the subcommittee on plans for changing the Town's official zoning map from a paper map to the GIS system. The Town is planning a flyover this spring to obtain more current and more accurate GIS data. The survey will use laser altimetry (LIDAR) to obtain high-resolution elevation data for all locations in town. This data will be significantly more accurate than current elevation data, some of which is based on USGS topographical maps dating back to the 1970s. The revised data will impact the borders of the FPC district, which in some areas is defined by elevation contours.

The subcommittee discussed suggestions that had been presented by the public at the Dec. 3 meeting. Mr. O'Keeffe noted that several people had raised the issue of providing incentives for redevelopment of brownfields, which is a priority B item on the current work list. Mr. Tucker noted that there is currently no official list of brownfields sites, but that the Planning Department has a list of sites widely considered to be brownfields, which he would circulate to the subcommittee members. Ms. Barberet noted that there were cases where brownfields development might be undesirable, particularly on sites outside town and village centers, and that development in existing centers would be preferable to development on less central brownfields sites. Mr. Tucker noted that many brownfield contamination issues are tied to past agricultural practices and many of these sites might not be near town or village centers. Ms. Stein noted that grants are available to facilitate brownfields redevelopment.

Mr. O'Keeffe raised the issue of minimum values for certain dimensional regulations, which was suggested by Mary Streeter at the Dec. 3 meeting. The suggestion was that if the Town wanted to encourage certain developmental patterns, such as multi-story mixed-use development, it could regulate dimensions such as building height and lot coverage so as to require minimum standards, rather than just having maximum values. The subcommittee discussed various ways that this might be implemented.

The subcommittee discussed other issues from the high-priority section of its work list. Mr. Tucker updated the subcommittee on the Main/Dickinson/High Street rezoning proposal, including a map showing proposed zoning changes and a summary of how the proposed Business-Neighborhood zoning district would be defined. The board discussed the proposed expansion of the Municipal Parking District, including a map showing the areas of proposed expansion. Ms. Barberet expressed concerns relating to expanding into the R-G area bounded by Cowles Lane, North Prospect Street, and Hallock Street, stating that removing parking requirements there could increase pressure on other parking areas.

The subcommittee discussed the Mullin Rule and its potential applicability to the Planning Board. Mr. O'Keeffe stated that he did not believe that this was an issue that the subcommittee needed to deal with, and it should be instead be considered by the board as a whole. He asked that the Planning Board schedule an agenda item to discuss the rule and consider its adoption. Ms. Barberet indicated that she needed to have information in advance before considering the rule. It was proposed that the discussion be scheduled at the board's meeting of February 4, 2009, and that explanatory materials be distributed as part of packets for the January 21, 2009 meeting, in order to give board members adequate time to consider the issue.

The subcommittee continued its earlier discussion of the Family Day Care, Taxi Services, and Recreational Facilities proposals. Mr. O'Keeffe expressed concerns about the newly-proposed Family Day Care and Taxi Services proposals being considered ahead of existing higher-priority issues, and Mr. Tucker stated that these were not necessarily for immediate consideration.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 PM. The next Zoning Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for 5:00 PM on January 21, 2009, in the Town Room at Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Jonathan O'Keeffe, Subcommittee member